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5 NIGHTS OUT
A curated calendar of live music not to be missed

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	MONDAY
The 1E, Aaron Embry Troubadour 9081 Santa Monica Blvd. $12, 8 p.m.	**Cyndi Lauper** Greek Theatre 2700 N. Vermont $25-$85, 8 p.m.	**Cold Cave, Boyd Rice** Center for the Arts Eagle Rock 2225 Colorado Blvd. $15, 8 p.m.	**Jimmy Webb** Levitt Pavilion at MacArthur Park Free, 8 p.m.	**Camera Obscura** Amoeba Music-Hollywood 6400 Sunset Blvd. Free, 6 p.m.

NEW ALBUM

Kanye's sermon not for the meek

RANDALL ROBERTS
POP MUSIC CRITIC

As Earth awaits the newest massive from Kanye West, called "Yeezus," the rapper from Chicago has been sharing some of his teachings.

He delivered his latest sermon Sunday night at New York's Governors Ball Music Festival, where West, 36, offered new work amid nearly two dozen songs, and marked the evening with a cuss-filled monologue that conveyed the current Yeezus philosophy.

This landscape no longer seeks radio or album sales, but something bigger, said West. "With this album we ain't drop no single to radio," he explained. "We ain't got no NBA campaign, nothing like that. ... we ain't even got no cover. We just made some real music. Like, back when I used to make albums and ...— a couple years ago — we'd go away and work on the album for months or something. We'd always have to hold the album to like August or September, or till the perfect moment and ... Because it means that I think it would sell more if it get more audience and ... But, honestly, at this point when I listen to radio that ain't where I want to be no more."

Where does West want to be? "Honestly at this point, I could give a ... about selling a million records as long as I put out an album for the summer that y'all can rock to for all ... summer," he explained. "At this point, I don't really give a ... about outside opinion."

The forthcoming record arrives June 18, built up over months of strategic teasing that suggests he cares a little.

Though the official track listing and production credits have yet to be unveiled, tweets, DJ sets and interviews have revealed that likely collaborators include Daft Punk, Skrillex, Hudson Mohawk, Odd Future, John Legend, The-Dream and Pusha T, among others.

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STAR ARCHIVES ASSOCIATED PRESS

KANYE WEST teases his latest album, "Yeezus," at a music festival.

RAMONE ST. NICHOLAS

INDIA.ARIE will test her new material on Playboy Jazz Festival patrons at the Hollywood Bowl.

Rejuvenated

India.Arie rallies with a new collection, 'Songversation'

BY GERRICK D. KENNEDY

On India.Arie's new song, "Cocoa Butter," she sweetly sings of a love that nourishes past scars. It's a signature Arie track with a positive message wrapped in a tender groove that made news of a backlash over the single — her first in more than four years — disturbing.

The controversy? The single's artwork. On it the 37-year-old poses with her tresses in a towering head wrap, legs peeking from a short dress, and her skin, possibly glistening from the song's titular product, glowing.

The photo was trending on Twitter in March as commenters mulled her "lighter" complexion and issued a rash accusation: Did the singer — long praised for Afro-centric anthems such as "Brown Skin," "Video" and "I Am Not My Hair" — have her skin "bleached"?

"I was completely taken off guard," Arie said by phone from Atlanta. "(But) that conversation belongs to the black community. It's not TMZ fodder. I'm still trying to figure out how to wrap my words around my feelings about it."

"Part of it was serendipity," she continued. "They were talking about 'Cocoa Butter' and seeing my picture and talking about my album. When I left the scene four years ago I was struggling to get people to know I had an album out."

Though her glow on the cover is the result of what Arie calls "magnificent lighting," a great deal of that radiance came from finding the self-acceptance she's struggled with during career. She channeled those feelings into her fifth album, "Songversation," which comes out June 25.

When the Denver-born, Atlanta-based musician, born India Arie Simpson, arrived on the scene in 2000, she helped rejuvenate contemporary R&B with personal songs about love, spirituality, politics and self-love steeped in an acoustic-driven mix of soul, R&B, jazz, folk and hip-hop.

Arie instantly became a torchbearer for a new class of neo-soul singers that included Alicia Keys and Jill Scott. But after "Acoustic Soul," was shut out at the Grammys despite seven nominations in 2002, Arie started feeling the pressure to fit into a landscape of easily marketable R&B divas.

"I'm not a straight-down-the-middle artist. There was a lane cut right out for me because people were interested, but that lasted a couple of years," she said. "If I were not a black artist but I was still singing, playing guitar and singing ballads that are spiritual and cerebral, I'd be easier to market because people accept that from white female singer-songwriters faster."

As Arie "walked the line really carefully" between satisfying label expectations and her own artistry, a handful of albums followed — some sturdier than others. She eventually crumbled after 2009's "Testimony: Vol. 2, Love & Politics," and considered leaving music.

"I always felt like — I mean I was told, really — I couldn't go too far with the productions because it didn't appeal to black radio," she explained. "It wasn't until I decided I was going to do what I wanted to do or I was going to quit that I empowered myself. I took my power back."

Though Arie's hard-earned confidence makes "Songversation" an inspirational, even iridescent listen, the album didn't come without conflict. The recording sessions were spurred by the demise of a previous album, "Open Door," a passion project with Israeli singer Idan Raichel. ("We couldn't agree on the business terms at all," Arie offered, "I had to take a deep breath and say, OK, let's just not do it.")

Instead, in "Songversation," she crafted the album she'd always wanted. It's her same guitar-steered soul, but reflected by an eclectic mix of sonic elements from her travels, especially in the Middle East. And the lyrics show Arie at her most personal.

"I will no longer be defined by what someone else believed I am," she sings on "Soulbird Rise." "Now that I've dropped the weight/ I'm light as a feather."

The singer will test out the new material at the Hollywood Bowl on Sunday as part of the weekend's Playboy Jazz Festival. But Arie isn't concerned about how she fits on the eclectic bill.

"This is the best time of my life because I feel free. Even when it's hard, I still feel free," Arie said.

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The 35th Playboy Jazz Festival

Lineup

Saturday: George Duke with Jeffrey Osborne, Naturally 7 with Herbie Hancock, Angelique Kidjo and Hugh Masekela, Robert Glasper Experiment, Gregory Porter, Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band with Lee Ritenour, "Ole Coltrane" James Carter and Poncho Sanchez and His Latin Jazz Band, Pedrito Martinez Group, Phil Woods, Los Angeles County High School for the Arts Jazz Ensemble.

Sunday: Sheila E., Bob James with David Sanborn, India.Arie, Trombone Shorty, The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, Taj Mahal, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, ELEW and the JazzAntiqua Dance Ensemble, The LAUSD Beyond the Bell Jazz Band. Hosted by George Lopez.

When: June 15-16, 3 p.m.
Where: Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N Highland Ave., L.A.
Cost: $20 to $360
Info: www.playboyjazzfestival.com

ALBUM REVIEWS

Soothing harmony, rapping comedians

TONY BENNETT

Boards of Canada
"Tomorrow's Harvest"
(Warp)
★★★

Boards of Canada has crafted mysterious instrumental music in its studio in Scotland for the past decades, and the result on its fourth album, "Tomorrow's Harvest" (its first full-length release in nearly eight years) is another visit down a Brian Eno-inspired wormhole, one in which each tone, though synthetically altered, feels handcrafted.

The snare, for example, in "Jacquard Causeway" has a sonic footprint unlike any other snare-snap you'll hear all year. The soothing synthesizer harmonies on the drifting "Collapse" could be swiped from a mid-80s New Age compilation.

Distant sampled voices drift through rhythms with a stealthiness; some, as in "Telepath" contain utterances so integrated into the mix that you're not sure if somebody has crept up behind you and is whispering in your ears.

Fans of Boards of Canada won't find many fresh revelations, though, even if the record is gratifying. Any of these songs could have appeared at any point in the group's discography. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing. A full-body massage, after all, is just as pleasing the fourth time as the first.

— RANDALL ROBERTS

The Lonely Island
"The Wack Album"
(Universal Republic)
★★

The Lonely Island's third studio disc presents an unlikely problem: Nearly eight years after they attained instant comedy-rap stardom with "Lazy Sunday," these "Saturday Night Live" veterans have become better rappers than comedians.

Andy Samberg, Akiva Schaffer and Jorma Taccone rhyme with impressive style over tracks that sound virtually indistinguishable from those on records by any number of other A-list hip-hop acts. "YOLO" features a verse by L.A.'s Kendrick Lamar, and the Bay Area trailblazer Too Short shows up in "The Compliments."

But with songs about nerdy white people ("Huge") and fraught sexual relations with older women (a slow jam featuring T-Pain has an unprintable title), "The Wack Album" feels awfully short on fresh ideas. And though it's churlish to complain about a tune in which Hugh Jackman debases himself so gamely, the raunchy "You've Got the Look" is a retread of Michael Bolton's turn in the 20th viral hit "Jack Sparrow."

— MIKAEL WOOD

Albums are rated on a scale of four stars (excellent), three stars (good), two stars (fair) and one star (poor)

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